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Roots of Pollard case run deep in Israel

By LARS-ERIK NELSON

WASHINGTON—A couple of years ago, an Israeli general named Yekutiel Adem met an American Jewish college professor in the restaurant on top of the Hotel Washington, across the street from the Treasury Building here.

"He wanted me to compile lists of Jewish graduate students studying electronics—the real super-duper ones," the professor recalled yesterday. "He told me to find Orthodox Jews; he said they were the most reliable."

The intent was both clumsy and clear: Israel needed ongoing sources of intelligence in the sophisticated U.S. electronics industry, and it was hoping to recruit young American Jews.

It is hard to imagine anything more politically reckless than trying to use American Jews to betray their citizenship and spy for Israel. The accusation of "dual loyalty" is a painful one, especially to Jews who have risen high in the ranks of the U.S. government—and who feel most betrayed by the confession of Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard.

One Israeli expert here traces the recklessness to former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon: "When Arik (Sharon's nickname) became defense minister in 1981, he brought in Rafi Eitan, a brilliant intelligence veteran, and told him, 'After Camp David, the Americans are selling all kinds of weapons to the Arabs; take care of that for me.'"

It was not an unusual assignment. A 1979 secret CIA study of Israeli intelligence operations matter-of-factly lists Israel's second and third intelligence priorities, after Arab military targets, as: "(2) Collection of information on secret U.S. policy or decisions, if any, concerning Israel; (3) Collection of scientific intelligence in the U.S. and other developed countries."

For all the friendship between our two countries, Israel is a sovereign state, not our pet. Its government is duty-bound to protect its national security. If Israel suspects the U.S. is making secret deals with its Arab enemies or selling them sophisticated weapons, it must do its best, by fair means or foul, to find out. That is a matter of national survival.

But when caught, pretenses must stop. When Pollard, a U.S. Naval Intelligence employee, was arrested last

November on charges of spying for Israel, the Jerusalem government put on a horrified face and insisted that Pollard was part of an unauthorized, rogue operation that did not have the approval of top Israeli leaders.

The indictment that was released in U.S. District Court here Wednesday undermines that denial: Pollard made contact in 1984 with Israeli Air Force Col. Aviem Sella, then a graduate student at New York University. Sella arranged for meetings in safe-houses—the homes of Israeli diplomats in the Washington area.

A meeting was arranged in Paris with Eitan, a veteran Israeli intelligence agent. Pollard was promised \$1,500 a month and was paid \$10,000 in cash as reimbursement for his trip and \$300,000 total. This is a lot of money for an "unauthorized operation"—especially considering that the Israeli government prosecuted its own prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1977 for having a private U.S. bank account with \$10,000 in it.

Israeli officials ordered Pollard to use his security clearances to gain access to "various national defense facilities," the Justice Department said. One of his handlers, Joseph Yagur, the Israeli science attaché in Washington, reported to Pollard on "specific instances in which the information had been utilized by various branches of the Israeli military."

Yagur also produced for Pollard an Israeli passport, bearing Pollard's picture and the name "Danny Cohen," which was to be Pollard's new identity when he eventually moved to Israel. When Pollard showed up at Israeli safe houses in Washington, a team was ready to photocopy his secret documents. Pollard was given instructions that, if caught, he was to try to seek asylum in the Israeli embassy, and was told the code words to use.

Pollard was no more a lone, unauthorized spy than U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was an off-course weather pilot, when the Russians shot him down in 1960.

IS IT POSSIBLE that Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Moshe Arens didn't know about a major, expensive, full-scale military espionage operation targetted against their closest ally and biggest benefactor? To believe that is to insult their intelligence.